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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MNUC](#) [EPET](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: PREVIEW OF IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOTTAKI'S
VISIT TO NEW DELHI

REF: A. NEW DELHI 2043
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 2417
[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 00451

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Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Les Viguerie for Reasons 1.4
(B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a visit characterized by GOI officials and local observers as routine, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki will meet here on November 16 with Indian External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna. Mottaki's planned visit, which follows a 2008 visit to Tehran by his Indian counterpart, is viewed by GOI sources and local Indo-Iranian experts as mostly a formal and symbolic event with the goal of continuing historical ties between Delhi and Tehran. Discussions will most likely focus on key bilateral issues, including the proposed India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI) pipeline project and other energy issues, and on counter-terrorism as it relates to Afghanistan and Pakistan. With regard to Iran's nuclear program, top GOI officials have assured us they will encourage Iran to adhere to its international obligations and engage in good faith in the P5 1 process. End Summary.

Talking Afghanistan and Pakistan

[1](#)2. (C) Krishna and Mottaki are likely to focus a good deal of their discussion on ways India and Iran can tackle terrorism in the region. Achieving stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan has increasingly become a key area of convergence for New Delhi and Tehran, especially after a deadly October 18 attack in Iran directed at top commanders of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that Iran attributed at least partially to rebels who operate from Pakistan. Ministry of External Affairs Undersecretary for Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran Affairs Siddhartha Nath told us November 5 that cross-border terrorism will be high on the agenda, particularly as it pertains to the Af-Pak region, as it is in both India and Iran's interest to see stability in

Afghanistan. Nath explained that neither India nor Iran want to see a return to extremist ideology in Afghanistan, and that the two must work together to prevent such an eventuality. Dismissing any potential negative perceptions over the timing of Mottaki's visit, given Prime Minister Singh's upcoming visit to Washington in late November, Nath maintained that Mottaki's visit has been on the planning radar ever since former FM Pranab Mukherjee visited Tehran in October 2008 and that the timing was of mutual convenience. Downplaying the overall importance of Mottaki's visit, Nath commented that the visit is a routine aspect of Indian efforts to maintain a normal relationship with a regional nation.

For Now, Proposed IPI Pipeline Project Appears Stalled

13. (C) Nath also told us that Krishna and Mottaki will discuss the IPI pipeline and other energy-related matters, adding that "India does not want to be left out" of such discussions. Although Nath declined to comment on the present feasibility of the project due to the unstable security situation in Pakistan and pricing issues, others believe that the project appears stalled for at least the short/medium term. Local Iran watcher P.R. Kumaraswamy, a professor at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, opined that the project is going nowhere but that India remains interested in the project at least partially to counter China's growing energy and economic tie-ups with Tehran. Israeli Embassy political officer Itay Tagner also expressed skepticism that the pipeline project was realistic given the security situation in key parts of Iran and Pakistan. Like Nath, he downplayed the significance of Mottaki's visit, stating that the Israelis do not regard it as anything more

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than a routine meeting.

Iran's Nuclear Program

14. (C) The MEA's Nath was cagey and reticent when asked whether Iran's nuclear program would be discussed during the Mottaki-Krishna meeting. In recent weeks, however, top GOI officials have assured us they will encourage Iran to adhere to its international obligations and engage in good faith in the P5 1 process. In a September 30 meeting (Ref A), Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao told the Ambassador that India would be helpful in this regard, an assurance echoed by Krishna when he met Under Secretary Burns on October 15 in New Delhi (Ref B). Explaining the GOI stance on Iran's nuclear program, Rao pointed to a reply made by Prime Minister Singh to a journalist at the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh in which Singh stated that even though Iran and India have good relations and India recognizes Iran's right to develop a peaceful nuclear program, Tehran must honor its obligations as an NPT signatory and demonstrate transparency when dealing with the IAEA. Rao added "off the record" that Iran does not behave in a transparent manner, even with India. Without prompting, Rao raised the issue of further sanctions against Iran by expressing doubt that sanctions will have the desired impact on the Iranian leadership. She predicted that further sanctions would risk a repeat of the Iraq sanctions experience which, in her view, "hurt the people while the regime was able to survive." She twice reminded the Ambassador that India gets about 24 percent of its oil from Iran and would be hard-pressed to find alternate suppliers.

15. (C) Comment: This visit looks more like a check-the-box exercise than an in-depth review of bilateral relations. We will be keeping a close eye on the atmospherics and any statements coming out of the meetings. End Comment.
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